

Citizen Action of Wisconsin, Health Care for America: Now details that congress must close the medicaid coverage gap to address health equity

Posted on Friday, Jun 18, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Citizen Action of Wisconsin and Health Care for America Now (HCAN) released a [new issue brief](#) today highlighting racial equity in health care policies as the nation prepares to commemorate Juneteenth, which marks the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States.

The report describes how Congress and the Biden Administration can reduce racial disparities that result in worse health outcomes and diminished economic security for Black and Brown people by prioritizing policies that make healthcare affordable and expanding coverage.

Specifically, the report details how closing the Medicaid coverage gap in twelve states that have not yet expanded Medicaid would increase health equity. Nationally, about 4 million low-income people could gain coverage under Medicaid if these states expand Medicaid, including 2.2 million adults with incomes below the poverty line. Of this number, 28% are Black and another 28% are Latino. Medicaid expansion in these states would finally finish the job of implementing the Affordable Care Act which now covers 31 million people, the largest number in its history.

The ACA brought the number of uninsured people to historical lows and narrowed health disparities. Latino, Black, and Native Americans had [higher percentage point increases](#) in coverage than whites since these groups were all more likely to be

uninsured before the ACA was implemented.

In Wisconsin, [202,546](#) residents have gained health coverage through the Affordable Care Act. Since 2013, the rate of uninsured dropped from [13.4%](#) in 2013 to [12.3%](#) in 2019.

Medicaid expansion has a proven track record of [reducing health disparities](#). Yet, three fourths of states that have not expanded Medicaid despite increased incentives under the American Rescue Plan are in the South, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. [Three](#) of these states (Texas, Georgia, Florida) also have the largest number of non-Hispanic Black people in the country. Texas and Florida are also among the [top five](#) states with the largest populations of Hispanic Blacks.

“Health equity is not a blue state or a red state issue,” said Robert Kraig, Executive Director of Citizen Action of Wisconsin “No matter where someone lives or what they look like, no one should be denied access to quality healthcare based on political grudges. Many other states, Democratic and Republican led, have put the interests and needs of their constituents ahead of their own partisanship. Politicians in the remaining states – like Wisconsin – should not be allowed to hold low income people, Black people and Brown people hostage to their own agenda. Biden and Congress must intervene and there’s never been a better time.”

Georgia Senators Warnock and Ossoff wrote a recent letter urging Congress and the Biden Administration to take action to create a federal solution for people denied Medicaid coverage because of political gridlock that would allow people in non-expansion states to access affordable healthcare. Doing so would build on other improvements that emerged in ARPA that expanded premium tax credits and gave millions more people access to quality, affordable healthcare with lower premiums.

[More than a third](#) of enrollees have a plan that costs \$10 or less per month including 4 in 10 new enrollees. ARPA increased funding to address maternal health by extending health coverage for new mothers, gave states the option to expand home based and community services and provided subsidized COBRA coverage for laid off and unemployed workers. The rescue plan also increased funding for Medicaid expansion as an incentive to states to finally expand coverage to uninsured but none of the dozen states took up the funding.

Members of the Black, Hispanic and Asian Congressional Caucuses are now working

together to advance closing the coverage gap as a key strategy to address racial health disparities, starting with a Tri Caucus sign on letter. Wisconsin Representative Gwen Moore signed on to the letter.